

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE


Farm Service Agency
Washington, DC 20250

Notice PM-2256

For: FFAS Employees

Announcing A Change in the Payment Method for Spot Awards

Approved by: Deputy Administrator, Management



1 Overview

**A
Background**

As a result of an OIG audit, the Department has instructed agencies to cease paying spot cash awards with convenience checks and begin using the Quick Track Award (QTA) payment method. The QTA payment method has been developed by the Department and NFC so that agencies have access to an award that can be granted relatively quickly without using convenience checks. With Spot Award/QTA payment method, NFC pays the award by Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT).

Note: The Department is now referring to Spot Awards as QTA's.

**B
Purpose**

This notice informs all employees:

- that convenience checks will no longer be used to pay Spot Awards/QTA
- of the procedures to follow when processing the new Spot Award/QTA payment method.

**C
Effective Date**

The switch was effective **July 29, 2001** (Pay Period 15).

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Disposal Date

October 1, 2002

Distribution

All FAS, FSA, and RMA employees; State
Offices relay to County Offices

1 Overview (Continued)

D

Labor Relations Obligations

This notice will become effective upon issuance. The effective date for bargaining unit employees will be deferred in response to a request to negotiate over its impact and implementation. Requests must be submitted in writing, with proposals, no later than COB 15 workdays from receipt of this notice.

E

Combined Administrative Management System (CAMS) Users

Offices with CAMS that have deployed the web to their employees should submit Spot Award/QTAs nominations using CAMS.

2 Differences Between a Spot Award and Spot Award/QTA

A

Spot Cash Award

When a spot cash award was approved:

- the local check issuing authority:
 - issued payment, not NFC
 - did not deduct taxes and other withholdings from the Spot Award
 - issued a convenience check for the full amount of the Spot Award to the employee
- the personnel action was processed through NFC; however, NFC did not generate a check, but increased or "grossed up" the amount of the employee's earnings to include taxes and other withholdings that the employee had not yet paid.

Example: A \$200 Spot Award may appear on the employee's Statement of Earnings and Leave as a \$260 increase to the employee's earnings.

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2 Differences Between a Spot Award and Spot Award/QTA (Continued)

B QTA

When Spot Award/QTA's are approved:

- NFC will:
 - issue payment by EFT within 72 hours of Spot Award/QTA being processed into the NFC database
 - issue payment for the full amount of Spot Award/QTA
 - continue to "gross up" the amount to cover unpaid taxes, etc., and this increased amount will continue to appear on the employee's Statement of Earnings and Leave.

Note: Spot Award/QTA's can be any amount between \$50 and \$500, in \$50 increments.

3 Recommending and Approving Spot Award/QTA's Using CAMS

A Recommending Individual's Responsibilities

Any employee, not only the recipient's supervisor, may be the recommending individual. The recommending individual shall take the following steps to nominate an employee for Spot Award/QTA.

Step	Action
1	Access the CAMS website at http://CAMS.usda.gov and click on the "CAMS" in the top of the screen to go to the CAMS self-service logon screen.
2	Sign in by entering your login ID & password.
3	Select "Awards" from the left side of the screen.
4	Select "Quick Track Award".
5	Enter the Employee ID information for the employee you want to recommend. Note: A detailed search may be conducted to find that information.
6	Select "Continue".
7	On the Award Recommendation screen, enter the recommended award amount and submit a brief justification (1 or 2 sentences).
8	Select "Submit" to complete the award recommendation process.

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3 Recommending and Approving Spot Award/QTAs Using CAMS (Continued)

B

Approving Official's Responsibilities

The recommended award will appear on the approving official's worklist. The approving official shall review the Spot Award/QTA nomination and make 1 of the following decisions.

IF the approving official...	THEN...
approves or modifies and approves the nomination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> forward the Spot Award/QTA nomination to the appropriate servicing personnel office (SPO) prepare a certificate of merit and send to recommending individual.
disapproves the nomination	Attach a note to the Spot Award/QTA nomination explaining why the nomination was disapproved and return to the recommending individual.

C

SPO's Responsibilities

After receiving the approved Spot Award/QTA nomination, SPO's shall take the following action:

- enter a case number in the "Case No." block
- forward the nomination for processing according to paragraph 5.

4 Recommending and Approving Spot Award/QTAs Using AD-287-2

A

Recommending Individual's Responsibilities

Any employee, not only the recipient's supervisor, may be the recommending individual. The recommending individual shall take the following steps to nominate an employee for Spot Award/QTA.

Step	Action
1	Prepare a written justification.
2	Complete AD-287-2. Notes: Ensure that block 8, "Accounting Code" is correct according to 98-FI, paragraph 12 and Exhibit 8.
3	Sign and date AD-287-2 in item 20.
4	Send the written justification and AD-287-2 to the approving official.

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4 Recommending and Approving Spot Award/QTAs Using AD-287-2 (Continued)

B

**Approving
Official's
Responsibilities**

The approving official shall review the Spot Award/QTA nomination and make 1 of the following decisions.

IF the approving official...	THEN...
approves or modifies and approves the nomination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initial changes, if modified • sign and date AD-287-2 in item 22 • prepare a certificate of merit and send this and 1 copy of the approved Spot Award/QTA nomination to the recommending individual • forward the Spot Award/QTA nomination to the appropriate SPO.
disapproves the nomination	Attach a note to the Spot Award/QTA nomination explaining why the recommendation was disapproved and return to the recommending individual.

C

**SPO's
Responsibilities**

After receiving the original AD-287-2 documents, SPO's shall take the following action:

- enter a case number on AD-287-2 in the "Case No." block
 - complete AD-287-2, item 24, and sign and date in item 29
 - forward AD-287-2 for processing according to paragraph 5.
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5 Processing Unit Responsibilities

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Processing Unit Action

The processing unit shall:

- process Spot Award/QTAs nomination information according to CAMS Users' Manual, Chapter 4, "Processing Procedures - Change Actions Awards", to generate SF-50
 - enter the reason as either "Individual Quick Track Award", nature of action code 840 or "Group Quick Track Award", nature of action code 841
 - enter the date the Spot Award/QTA is processed as the effective date
 - print a copy of the approved Spot Award/QTA and file in the Employee's Performance File
 - file the OPF copy of AD-287-2 and justification in the Employee's Performance File
 - send a copy of Spot Award/QTA documentation to SPO.
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6 Contacts

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Questions

If there are questions about this notice, contact the appropriate office according to this table.

Location	Contact
FAS, RMA, and FSA National Office Employees	HRD, Performance Management, Benefits, and Awards Branch at 202-418-8975 or 202-418-8973 or TTY at 202-418-9116.
APFO, KCCO, KCAO, KC-ITSTO, KC-ITSDO, KCFO, and State Office Employees	KCAO, Personnel Division, Employee Relations Branch at 816-926-6643 or TTY 816-926-6148.
County Office Employees	State Office.
